

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

1 – 29 (cancelled)

30. (Currently amended) A gelatin-free soft caramel comprising a soft caramel base mass that contains a polysaccharide hydrocolloid which is selected from the group consisting of gum arabic, gellan gum, guar gum, cellulose gum, carob seed gum, tamarind seed gum, tara gum, gum tragacanth, xanthan gum, agar, alginate, carrageenan, konjac, pectin, pullulan, unmodified starch, and a mixture thereof as texturing agent, a crystalline sweetener phase which is isomaltulose, and a noncrystalline sweetener phase which is formed of maltitol syrup [L] or polydextrose or hydrogenated starch hydrolysate or a mixture of two or three thereof, wherein the caramel is sucrose-free and gelatin-free, wherein the isomaltulose is the only crystalline sweetener present in the caramel, and wherein said polysaccharide hydrocolloid is the only hydrocolloid present in said caramel.

31. (Previously presented) Gelatin-free soft caramel as in Claim 62, where the polysaccharide hydrocolloid is selected from the group consisting of gum arabic, gellan gum, guar gum, cellulose gum, carob seed gum, tamarind seed gum, tara gum, gum tragacanth, xanthan gum, agar, alginate, carrageenan, konjac, pectin, pullulan, a starch, a modified starch and a mixture thereof.

32. (Previously presented) Gelatin-free soft caramel as in Claim 30, where the polysaccharide is a mixture of gum arabic and gellan gum.

33. (Previously Presented) Gelatin-free soft caramel as in Claim 32, where gum arabic and gellan gum are present in a ratio from 5:1 to 15:1.

34. (Canceled)

35. (Currently amended) Gelatin-free soft caramel as in Claim 30, where the noncrystalline sweetener phase of the soft caramel base mass is ~~formed of glucose syrup or starch hydrolyzate or both~~ malitol syrup.

36. (Previously presented) Gelatin-free soft caramel as in Claim 30, where the soft caramel base mass comprises one or more intensive sweeteners.

37. (Previously presented) Gelatin-free soft caramels as in Claim 36, where the intensive sweetener is selected from the group consisting of cyclamate, saccharine, aspartame, glycyrrhizin, neohesperidine dihydrochalcone, thaumatin, monellin, acesulfame, alitame and sucralose.

38. (Previously presented) Gelatin-free soft caramel as in Claim 30, where the soft caramel base mass contains 2 to 15% fat.

39. (Previously presented) Gelatin-free soft caramel as in Claim 30, where the soft caramel base mass contains at least one emulsifier.

40. (Previously presented) Gelatin-free soft caramel as in Claim 31, where the soft caramel base mass contains a positive amount up to 5% of at least one protein component.

41. (Previously presented) Gelatin-free soft caramel as in Claim 40, where the protein component comprises milk protein.

42. (Previously presented) Gelatin-free soft caramel as in Claim 30, where the soft caramel base mass contains one or more natural or synthetic food dyes.

43. (Previously Presented) Gelatin-free soft caramel as in Claim 42, where the food dye is selected from the group consisting of chlorophyll, a chlorophyllin, carmine red, alura red, β -carotene, a riboflavin, an anthocyan, betanine, erythrosine, indigo carmine, tartrazine or titanium dioxide.

44. (Previously presented) Gelatin-free soft caramel as in Claim 30, where the soft caramel base mass contains flavorings and flavoring agents.

45. (Previously Presented) Gelatin-free soft caramel as in Claim 44, where the flavorings and flavoring agents are selected from the group consisting of essential oils, synthetic flavorings, fruit essences, eucalyptus, peppermint oil, menthol and acids.

46. (Previously presented) Gelatin-free soft caramel as in Claim 30, where the water content of the soft caramel base mass is 5 to 14% water.

47. (Previously presented) Gelatin-free soft caramel as in Claim 46, where the water content of the soft caramel base mass is 6 to 12% water.

48. (Previously presented) Gelatin-free soft caramel as in Claim 46, where the soft caramel base mass contains flavorings and flavoring agents; at least one emulsifier; at least one intensive sweetener is selected from the group consisting of cyclamate, saccharine, aspartame, glycyrrhizin, neohesperidine dihydrochalcone, thaumatin, monellin, acesulfame, alitame and sucralose; and 2 to 15% fat.

49. (Previously presented) Gelatin-free soft caramel as in Claim 30, where the soft caramel base mass additionally comprises at least one medicinal active agent.

50. (Previously presented) Gelatin-free soft caramel as in Claim 49, where the medicinal active agent is selected from the group consisting of dextromethorphan, hexylresorcinol/menthol, phenylpropanolamine, dyclonine, menthol eucalyptus, benzocaine and cetylpyridinium.

51 - 60. (Canceled)

61. (Previously presented) Gelatin-free soft caramel as in Claim 69, wherein the medicinal active agent is selected from the group consisting of dextromethorphan, hexylresorcinol/menthol, phenylpropanolamine, dyclonine, menthol eucalyptus, benzocaine and cetylpyridinium.

62. (Currently amended) A gelatin-free soft caramel comprising a soft caramel base mass comprising ~~polydextrose~~, hydrogenated palm kernel fat, at least one polysaccharide hydrocolloid as texturing agent, a crystalline sweetener phase which is isomaltulose, and a noncrystalline sweetener phase which is ~~polydextrose~~, wherein the isomaltulose is the only crystalline sweetener present in the caramel, and wherein the caramel is sucrose-free and gelatin-free.

63. (Previously presented) Gelatin-free soft caramel as in Claim 62, where the polysaccharide is a mixture of gum arabic and gellan gum.

64. (Previously presented) Gelatin-free soft caramel as in Claim 63, where gum arabic and gellan gum are present in a ratio from 5:1 to 15:1.

65. (Previously presented) Gelatin-free soft caramel as in Claim 62, where the soft caramel base mass comprises one or more intensive sweeteners.

66. (Previously presented) Gelatin-free soft caramel as in Claim 65, comprises one or more intensive sweeteners selected from the group consisting of cyclamate, saccharine, aspartame, glycyrrhizin, neohesperidine dihydrochalcone, thaumatin, monellin, acesulfame, alitame and sucralose.

67. (Previously presented) Gelatin-free soft caramel as in Claim 62, where the soft caramel base mass contains 2 to 15% fat.

68. (Previously presented) Gelatin-free soft caramel as in Claim 62, where the water content of the soft caramel base mass is 5 to 14% water.

69. (Previously presented) Gelatin-free soft caramel as in Claim 68, where the water content of the soft caramel base mass is 6 to 12% water.

70. (Previously presented) Gelatin-free soft caramel as in Claim 62, where the soft caramel base mass additionally comprises at least one medicinal active agent.

71. (Previously presented) Gelatin-free soft caramel as in Claim 62, where the soft caramel base mass contains flavorings and flavoring agents; at least one emulsifier; at least one intensive sweetener selected from the group consisting of cyclamate, saccharine, aspartame, glycyrrhizin, neohesperidine dihydrochalcone, thaumatin, monellin, acesulfame, alitame and sucralose; 2 to 15% fat; and where the polysaccharide hydrochloride is selected from the group consisting of gum arabic, gellan gum, guar gum, cellulose gum, carob seed gum, tamarind seed gum, tara gum, gum tragacanth, xanthan gum, agar, alginate, carrageenan, konjac, pectin, pullulan, a starch, a modified starch and a mixture thereof.

72. (New) Gelatin-free soft caramel as in Claim 30, in which the noncrystalline sweetener phase is polydextrose.